

Building a Learning Society in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore



BUILDING A LEARNING SOCIETY IN JAPAN, THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND SINGAPORE

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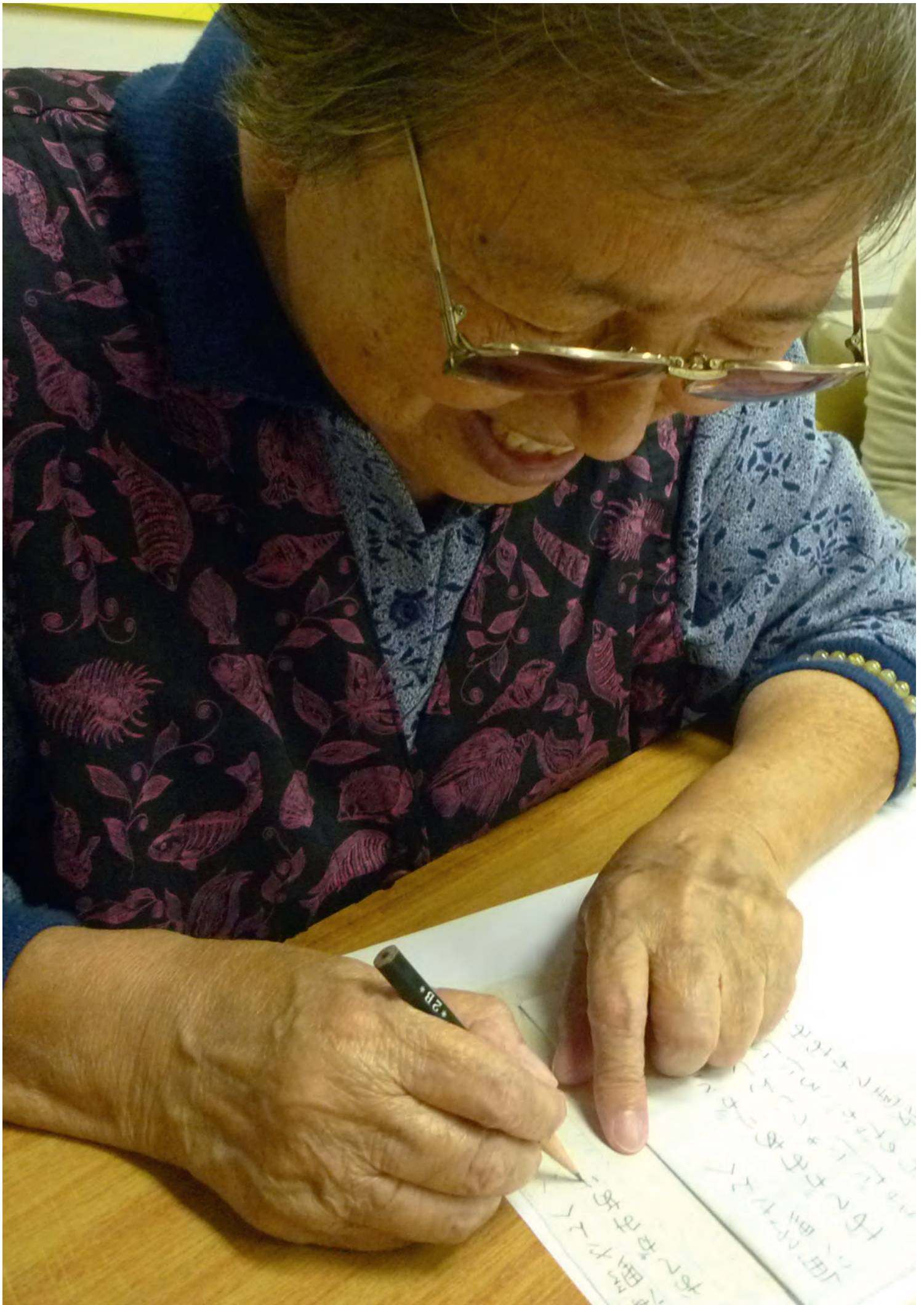
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACBS	Academic Credit Bank System (Republic of Korea)	KRIVET	Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training
ACPA	Accreditation Council for Practical Abilities (Japan)	LLL	Lifelong Learning
APACC	Asia Pacific Accreditation and Certification Commission	MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (Japan)
CDC	Community Development Council (Singapore)	MOE	Ministry of Education (Singapore)
CLC	Community Learning Centres (all three countries)	NACLL	National Advisory Committee for Lifelong Learning (Japan)
CPTE	Council for Professional and Technical Education (Singapore)	NFE	Non-Formal Education
DOE	Desired Outcomes of Education (Singapore)	NILE	National Institute for Lifelong Education (Republic of Korea)
EI	Employment Insurance (Republic of Korea)	NTQS	National Technical Qualifications System (Republic of Korea)
FLC	Family Life Centres (Singapore)	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
FLEC	Family Life Education Centres (Singapore)	OUI	Open University of Japan
GROW	Growth, Recognition, Opportunity and Well-Being (Singapore)	PA	People's Association (Singapore)
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD)
IDA	Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore	SCCs	Student Care Centres (Singapore)
iN2015	Intelligent Nation 2015 (Singapore)	SDF	Skills Development Fund (Singapore)
JAVADA	Japan Vocational Ability Development Association	SDL	Skills Development Levy (Singapore)
JOCW	Japan OpenCourseWare Consortium	UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
KACE	Korean Association for Community Education	UNISIM	Singapore Institute of Management University
KNOU	Korean National Open University	WDA	Workforce Development Agency (Singapore)
		WSQ	Workforce Skills Qualifications (Singapore)
		WTS	Workfare Training Scheme (Singapore)



Woman learning to write in Osaka, Japan

FOREWORD

The concept of lifelong learning, introduced into international debate in the UNESCO report *Learning to Be* (1972), has become recognised as all learning ‘from cradle to grave’, including formal, non-formal and informal learning. It focuses on the triangle of knowledge, skills and attitudes that enhances employability, personal development, active citizenship and social inclusion. Learning holds deep significance in Asian culture and will certainly continue to have critical importance in today’s globalised and technology-driven world.

This report was originally commissioned by the National Steering Committee on Building a Learning Society (2012–2020) in Viet Nam as a reference document to assist policymakers and education experts in Viet Nam in their efforts to develop a national strategy for building a learning society based on the example of three countries that provide a wide range of learning opportunities for their citizens; namely, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore. What these countries have in common, in addition to highly prosperous and modernised economies, is a strong Confucian influence on education and culture. This influence is also strongly felt in Viet Nam. Compared to the European emphasis on learning for work, the main emphasis in these countries is on the value of learning to promote the overall well-being of society.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Viet Nam, Nguyen Thien Nhan stated that ‘lifelong learning has really become a strategic issue in Viet Nam over the last ten years. Much has been done but not all achieved. The process of moving from a traditional education system to lifelong learning is slow and confusing’. I hope, in making this report available to policymakers and practitioners in the international community, that it can also inform other countries’ efforts to clarify and fast-track lifelong learning.

Arne Carlsen
Director
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

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Three countries – Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore – were selected as model countries by the authorities of Viet Nam. The authors extend their sincere thanks to the authors of the three country papers that greatly informed the main findings of this synthesis report: Hiromi Sasai, the National Institute for Educational Policy Research for Japan; Sunok Jo of the National Institute for Lifelong Education for the Republic of Korea; and Jin Yang and Koeun Lee for Singapore. Pak Tee Ng kindly provided his and his colleagues' papers on Singapore's lifelong learning policies and practices. The Ministry of Education of Singapore also kindly provided feedback and photos.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The idea of the learning society has been discussed as a concept since the late 1960s. In 1972 the concept was mooted in the report to UNESCO by the International Commission on the Development of Education, chaired by Edgar Faure, entitled *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow* (hereafter referred to as the 'Faure Report'). This report argued that education is no longer the privilege of the elite, nor is it applicable to only one age group; rather, it needs to embrace the whole community and the whole lifetime of the individual. The Faure Report appealed to UNESCO Member States to reorganise their educational structures on two basic premises: first, that a learning society is one in which all agencies and organised bodies, public and private, act as providers of education; and second, that all citizens should be engaged in learning, taking full advantage of the opportunities provided by the learning society.

Most significantly, the Faure Report argued: 'The school has its own role to play and will have to develop it even further. But it will be less and less in a position to claim the education functions in society as its special prerogative. All sectors — public administration, industry, communications, transport — must take part in promoting education. Local and national communities are in themselves eminently educative institutions' (Faure et al., 1972: 162). Furthermore, the Faure Report promoted the principle that 'every individual must be in a position to keep learning throughout his life' and that the idea of lifelong education is 'the keystone of the learning society' (op. cit.: 181).

In 1996 the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors, stressed in its report to UNESCO (*Learning: The Treasure Within*, hereafter referred to as the 'Delors Report'; Delors et al, 1996) that the concept of learning throughout life is key to the twenty-first century, and that it transcends the traditional distinction between initial and continuing education. The Delors Report also stressed that the concept of learning throughout life leads directly to that of a learning society, a society that offers many and varied opportunities for learning, both at the school level and in economic, social and cultural life. Such a society should enable people to develop a better understanding

of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community.

It is clear that the age we live in is beset by innumerable social and economic problems and challenges such as mass poverty and hunger, demographic shifts, unemployment, climate change, urbanisation, migration, financial crises, threats to peace and security, and the onward march of globalisation. In the face of such problems, many countries are adopting approaches that can be characterised by the terms 'learning society' and 'lifelong learning'. Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore are salient examples of this. Based on case study reports on the three countries (Sasai, 2012; Jo, 2012; Lee and Yang, 2012) and on published data, this synthesis report presents a description of their national socio-economic climates and an assessment of their political will and governmental commitment to building a learning society. In particular, it summarises the countries' key policies and strategies, analyses the priority building blocks called for in each case, and identifies some policy lessons learned.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXTS

While the developmental contexts of Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore are different, some common features necessary for building a learning society can be identified. It is generally accepted that the cultural traditions of the three countries have been heavily influenced by Confucianism. They therefore understand the importance of an educated workforce to achieve economic growth, and they recognise the need to invest in research. All three countries have striven to develop a knowledge-based economy and have pursued a policy of integrating education and human resources planning with economic policy. In the past several decades, all three countries, despite lacking natural resources, have seen high rates of economic growth. High rates of investment in education have ensured an educated, productive labour force, and high rates of saving have provided a ready supply of capital. Recent years, however, have seen major demographic shifts in these three countries give rise to rapidly ageing societies. These shifts will have a considerable influence on growth over the coming decades.

POLITICAL WILL, NATIONAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The value placed on education in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore is extremely high, reflecting both the aforementioned socio-economic contexts and the historical and cultural influence of Confucian philosophy. This is expressed in legal frameworks and national education policies in the three countries, where the right to education is guaranteed to all citizens throughout their lives. Measures may be summarised as follows:

Policies – With regard to learning in the workplace, the three countries link education and training with skills required in the labour market.

Action plans – To translate national policies into concrete measures, the governments have prepared action plans. Specific goals, expected results and performance indicators given in the plans guide the implementation, evaluation and improvement of strategies.

Governance – The three countries share the view that planning and delivery of learning opportunities are better conducted at local level. The role of the national ministries is to act as a guardian of standards, ensuring that overall curriculum needs are met and professional training is given to staff. However, institutional arrangements vary between the three countries.

Financing – Expenditure on adult education in the three countries is relatively low. However, government funds are supplemented by innovative funding schemes such as the Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund in Singapore and the Employment Insurance Fund in the Republic of Korea, which mobilise resources from the private sector. Regulations are also in place to encourage private sector and local government investment in lifelong learning. In Japan and the Republic of Korea, 33.6 per cent and 40.4 per cent respectively of total expenditure on educational institutions comes from private sources, including individual families. This is much higher than the OECD average of 16.5 per cent (OECD, 2011: 6).

LESSONS LEARNED

Some common lessons can be drawn from the three countries' endeavours. These may be summarised as follows:

Quality formal education – In Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore, schools have been made accessible to a mass clientele without compromising the quality of the schooling itself. This has been achieved by maintaining high standards of curriculum design and teacher performance and recognising the significance of retraining and regularly assessing educators.

Learning cities and community based learning – All three countries have a policy of supporting networks of community-based learning spaces, centres and organisations. Such facilities, which are in easy reach of the public, play a vital role in creating learning environments as people are motivated to make use of the ample learning opportunities in these centres in their spare time.

Workplace learning – The three countries have formed successful collaborations between employers and employees. Employees have the opportunity to develop their skills and often the employers are recognised and rewarded for excellence in employee training.

ICT and e-learning – Information and Communications Technology is having a profound influence on the growth of learning societies, as learning is now accessible to a wider range of learners. This has enormous potential for building a more cohesive and robust learning society.

Recognising learning outcomes – In the three countries, learners are informed of their specific achievements, which helps keep them motivated. Programmes identify and recognise various learning experiences and coach skills that are transferable and applicable to all companies.

Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore have already made remarkable progress in building learning societies. Their approaches and experiences have policy implications for many other countries. While the idea of a learning society is accepted by more and more countries in the world, there is no one size that fits all. It is therefore important to draw lessons from as many different contexts as possible, and for those countries that have achieved success in building learning societies to share their experiences. We hope that this report will contribute to this process of sharing and mutual learning.

2. NATIONAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXTS

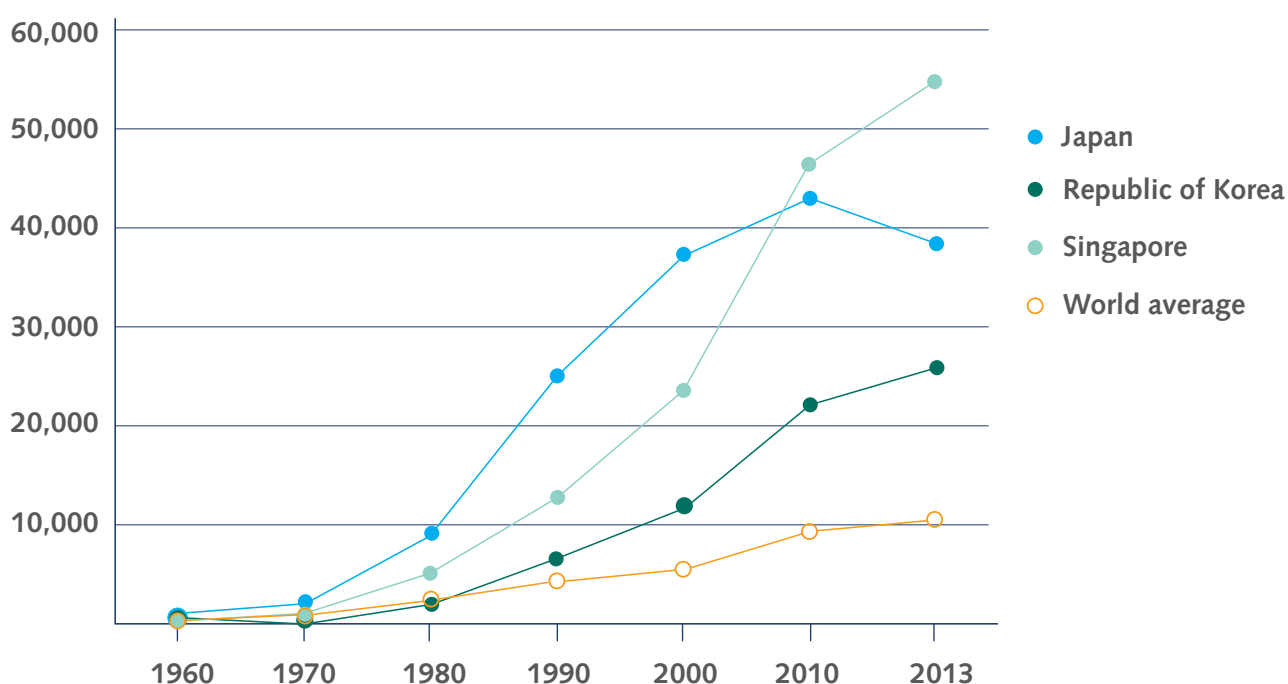
2.1. Cultural background

It is generally accepted that the cultural traditions of Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore have been influenced by Confucianism, although Confucian thought has been adapted and institutionalised in different ways. The typical characteristics of a Confucian society, as identified by scholars, include strong government, a tight bureaucratic structure, a hierarchical social order, a networked social structure, high levels of educational aspiration and attainment, as well as an emphasis on values such as diligence, thrift, cooperation, respect for elders, loyalty to one's group or organisation, reciprocity and humility (Hur and Hur, 1999). All three countries understand that an educated workforce is necessary to achieve economic growth and social development, and all of them recognise the need to invest in research in order to make their economies competitive and their societies innovative. Beginning in the 1960s, these countries sought to provide their populations with greater access to post-secondary education, and they achieved impressive results in this regard. However, some pedagogic elements from Confucianism – such as the dominant role of teachers, exam-driven schooling and pressure to

conform to group norms – might inhibit learners from developing creativity and an innovative spirit. To overcome these inhibiting factors, the countries concerned have in recent years promoted educational reform that specifically aims to enhance learners' ingenuity.

Due to the influence of Confucianism, citizens of all three countries value harmony within the family, community and society as a whole, which contrasts with the greater emphasis on individualism found in the West. The Confucian sense of community encourages individuals to put group needs ahead of their own personal desires. In Japan, for example, this strong sense of community and harmony has had a positive impact on facilitating learning in the community and bringing about changes that enhance local life. On one hand, Japanese society has become more individualistic as it has experienced social and economic changes such as declining birth rates, urbanisation and the transition to an information society (Tanaka, 2000). On the other hand, however, a new form of solidarity has emerged, in which formerly isolated individuals have established new types of bonds with others by initiating their own learning activities (Sawano, 2012).

Figure 1: GDP per capita (current US\$)



Source: World Bank, 2014

2.2. Economic development

Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore have experienced rapid and generally sustained economic growth since the 1960s and typify 'East Asian economic miracle'. As shown in Figure 1, per capita GDP (gross development product) increased markedly in the three countries since 1960. In the late 1980s, the Japanese economy was the first in Asia to catch up with industrial economies in the West. However, Japan's economic growth slowed down in the 1990s and has been in decline since 2010.

A number of major factors account for the rapid growth in the three countries. For example, a high savings rate has provided ample funds for investment, and their economic policies have consistently favoured a manufacturing sector with a strong emphasis on technology. With meagre natural resources making it difficult to compete in the international market, rapid industrialisation required substantial efforts to upgrade workforce skills and knowledge. In Singapore, for example, the government believes that the only way the country can compete with other developed countries is through heavy investment in education and the continuous upgrading of labour skills through training and development programmes (Gross, 1999). In recent years, as the three countries have striven to develop a knowledge-based economy, they have increasingly pursued a policy of integrating education and human resources planning with economic policies for sustainable growth.

A recent OECD study (Schleicher, 2012) shows that students in certain countries with few natural resources, including Singapore, the Republic of Korea and

Japan, achieved high scores in the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) tests. As Schleicher notes, one possible explanation for this is that these countries' main resources are their citizens' knowledge and skills, and that these societies therefore place a strong emphasis on education.

2.3. Globalisation

Globalisation is a process of integrating the globe through increasing flows of capital, products, services, ideas and people across international borders. Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore have all recognised the importance of promoting exports in order to reap the fruits of globalisation and compete in the world economy. As shown in Table 1, in the three countries the volume of exports of goods and services is substantial in relation to their GDP. In Singapore, the volume in 2012 was as high as 195 per cent of its GDP.

In all three countries, economic globalisation has stimulated higher productivity, new technology development and improved quality control. According to Chung (2002: 22–23), globalisation has exerted a tremendous impact on people, firms and states. Success and survival are now determined to a great extent by the ability to perform in global markets characterised by intense competition. The competitiveness of a nation is determined by many factors, including good human resources, willingness to adopt advanced technology, effective policies and political stability. Owing to the globalisation of economic activities and the rapid development of information technology, the three countries have focused on building a

Table 1: Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2012
Japan	10.7	10.6	13.4	10.3	10.9	15.2	14.7
Republic of Korea	3.2	12.9	30.2	25.9	35.0	49.4	56.3
Singapore	162.9	126.1	202.1	177.2	189.2	199.3	195.1
World average	12.8	14.6	19.9	19.6	25.7	28.8	30.3



Table 2: Urban population as % of total

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Japan	63.3	71.9	76.2	77.3	78.6	90.5
Republic of Korea	27.7	40.7	56.7	73.8	79.6	81.9
Singapore	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
World average	33.5	36.5	39.3	42.9	46.6	51.5

Source: World Bank, 2014

Table 3: Life expectancy at birth (years)

	1960		1970		1980		1990		2000		2010	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Japan	65	70	69	75	74	79	76	82	78	85	80	86
Republic of Korea	51	56	59	66	62	70	67	76	72	80	77	84
Singapore	62	69	65	72	69	75	74	78	76	80	79	84
World average	51	54	58	61	61	65	64	68	66	70	68	72

Source: World Bank, 2014

Table 4: Fertility rate (births per woman)

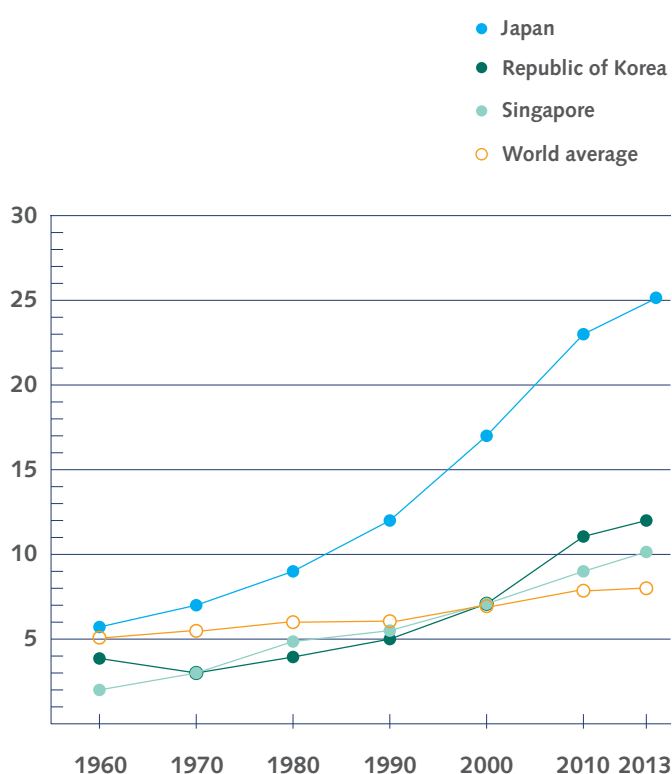
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Japan	2.0	2.1	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.4
Republic of Korea	6.2	4.5	2.8	1.6	1.5	1.2
Singapore	5.5	3.1	1.7	1.9	Not available	1.2
World average	5.0	4.7	3.7	3.3	2.6	2.5

Source: World Bank, 2014

capacity to compete in a knowledge economy. In the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, the policy has been to transform the economy into a knowledge-based one in which innovation can thrive, thereby improving overall productivity even further.

2.4. Demographic changes

Demographic changes have profound effects on a country's social and economic development. In past decades, demographic conditions in the three countries were conducive to high rates of economic growth. Since the 1950s, people of working age have made up the largest section of the population. High rates of investment in education have ensured an educated, productive labour force, and high rates of saving have provided a ready supply of capital (Mason, 1997). In particular, urbanisation has reallocated labour from the low-productivity agricultural sector to the higher-productivity service and industrial sectors, thus contributing to economic growth. Whereas Singapore is a city-state, as can be noted from Table 2, there was a massive migration of younger workers from rural to urban areas in Japan from the 1960s to the 1970s, and in the Republic of Korea from the 1970s to the 1980s.

Figure 2: Population aged 65 and above (% of total)

Source: World Bank, 2014

Table 5: Population aged 65 and above (% of total)

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2013
Japan	5.7	7.0	9.0	11.9	17.2	23.0	25.1
Republic of Korea	3.7	3.3	3.9	5.0	7.3	11.1	12.2
Singapore	2.0	3.3	4.7	5.6	7.3	9.0	10.2
World average	5.1	5.4	6.0	6.2	6.9	7.7	7.9

Source: World Bank, 2014



In recent years, however, there have been substantial demographic shifts in the three countries. Life expectancy at birth has improved for both men and women (Table 3); the fertility rate has decreased (Table 4); and the proportion of the population aged 65 and above has increased (Table 5). According to Tricks (2012), 'Japan is heading into a demographic vortex. It is the fastest-ageing society on Earth and the first big country in history to have started shrinking rapidly from natural causes'. At the turn of the century, 17 per cent of the population was aged 65 or over. This figure had climbed to 25 per cent in 2013 and is projected to reach 28 per cent by 2020 (Tricks, 2012). In Singapore, the combination of a longer lifespan and lower fertility rates is leading to a rapidly ageing population. In 2010, 9 per cent of the population was over 65 years of age. By 2030 it will be 20 per cent (Committee on Ageing Issues, 2006). Unlike some European countries, immigration in Japan and Korea remains much lower than the OECD average: 0.05 per cent and 0.11 per cent of the total populations respectively compared with 0.60 per cent average in 2011 (OECD, 2013).

These trends will have a considerable influence on growth over the coming decades. For example, the ageing population is creating new challenges with regard to employment, pensions and healthcare. However, certain examples show that a decreasing population does not necessarily mean economic and social decline. The economic effects of population decline can be offset by measures to reform the social system, restructure industry, introduce new technology and heighten productivity. For older people, whose physical independence is constrained, learning may be one of the few areas where they can continue to exercise independence. It is therefore very important that they be provided with educational opportunities that afford maximum learner autonomy and independence (McNair, 2009: 56). In Singapore, for example, the Committee of Ageing Issues (2006) called on universities and polytechnics to provide more learning opportunities for older people in order to enable them to continue learning and pursuing their areas of interest.

3. POLITICAL WILL, NATIONAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The value placed on education in all three countries is extremely high, reflecting both the socio-economic contexts described in the previous section and the historical and cultural influence of Confucian philosophy. This is expressed in the national constitutions and national education policies in the three countries, where the right to education is guaranteed to all citizens throughout their lives.

3.1. Policies

In recent years the concept of lifelong learning has been increasingly integrated and strengthened in national education policies through revisions and amendments. Given the socio-economic contexts outlined above and the existence of a strong political will to develop education and lifelong learning, the challenge is how to transform the idea of lifelong learning into concrete policy measures.

In the case of Japan, a major turning point for building a learning society came with the National Council on Education Reform, which was set up under the prime minister in the 1980s. Lifelong learning was then understood as a general idea encompassing school education, social education and home education. The main recommendation from this council was to systematise various lifelong learning opportunities. In 1990, the national legislature of Japan enacted the Law Concerning the Development of Implementation Systems and Other Measures for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning (known as the Lifelong Learning Promotion Law). To implement this law, a Lifelong Learning Bureau, later renamed the Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau, was established in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). The Central Education Council of MEXT conducted a holistic and integrated review of education. The recommendations from this council led to the first amendment of the Basic Act on Education in 2008, which added the principle of lifelong learning and placed emphasis on the enrichment of lifelong learning capacities in local communities. The Social Education Act was also revised in 2008 to include the family's role in building a learning society.

Many policymakers, practitioners and researchers in Japan, however, regard the Lifelong Learning Promotion

Law as highly centralised at the provincial level and not practical in promoting lifelong learning initiatives at the community level that encourage learner input. Furthermore, this law provides a framework for private sector investment in lifelong learning, but increased investment has not been forthcoming due to the collapse of the economic bubble in the early 1990s. Sasai (2012) argues that the law has focused on the administration and infrastructure of lifelong learning, but has neglected the teaching and learning contents, methodologies and the valuable contribution that community education can make in responding to social issues.

In the case of the Republic of Korea, the first evidence of a commitment to lifelong learning could be found in the 1980 amendment to its constitution. This involved the addition of article 31, which states: 'The State is responsible for promoting lifelong education'. Building on the Framework Act on Education (revised in 1997) and the first five-year national action plan for lifelong education promotion (2002–2006), the Lifelong Education Act enacted in 1999 was amended in 2007. It stipulates that: (1) all citizens shall be guaranteed equal opportunity for lifelong education; (2) lifelong education shall be based on learners' free participation and voluntary learning; (3) lifelong education shall not be exploited as a propaganda tool for promoting political or personal prejudice; and (4) any person who has completed a certain course of lifelong education shall be granted commensurate social recognition in the form of corresponding qualifications, recognition of academic background, etc.

In Singapore, the Thinking Schools, Learning Nation initiative, launched by the prime minister in 1997, has served as the overarching vision and strategy for building a learning society (Goh, 1997). Building a learning society in Singapore has moved from an education-specific policy to a broader national project. Before this programme was established, each sector – primary, secondary, tertiary and continuing education and training – was conceptualised and managed more or less independently. The goal of the new strategy is 'to cultivate in young people critical and creative ability and to provide them with further learning in a new integrated, continuing system'. This has led to fruitful synergies within and across government sectors.

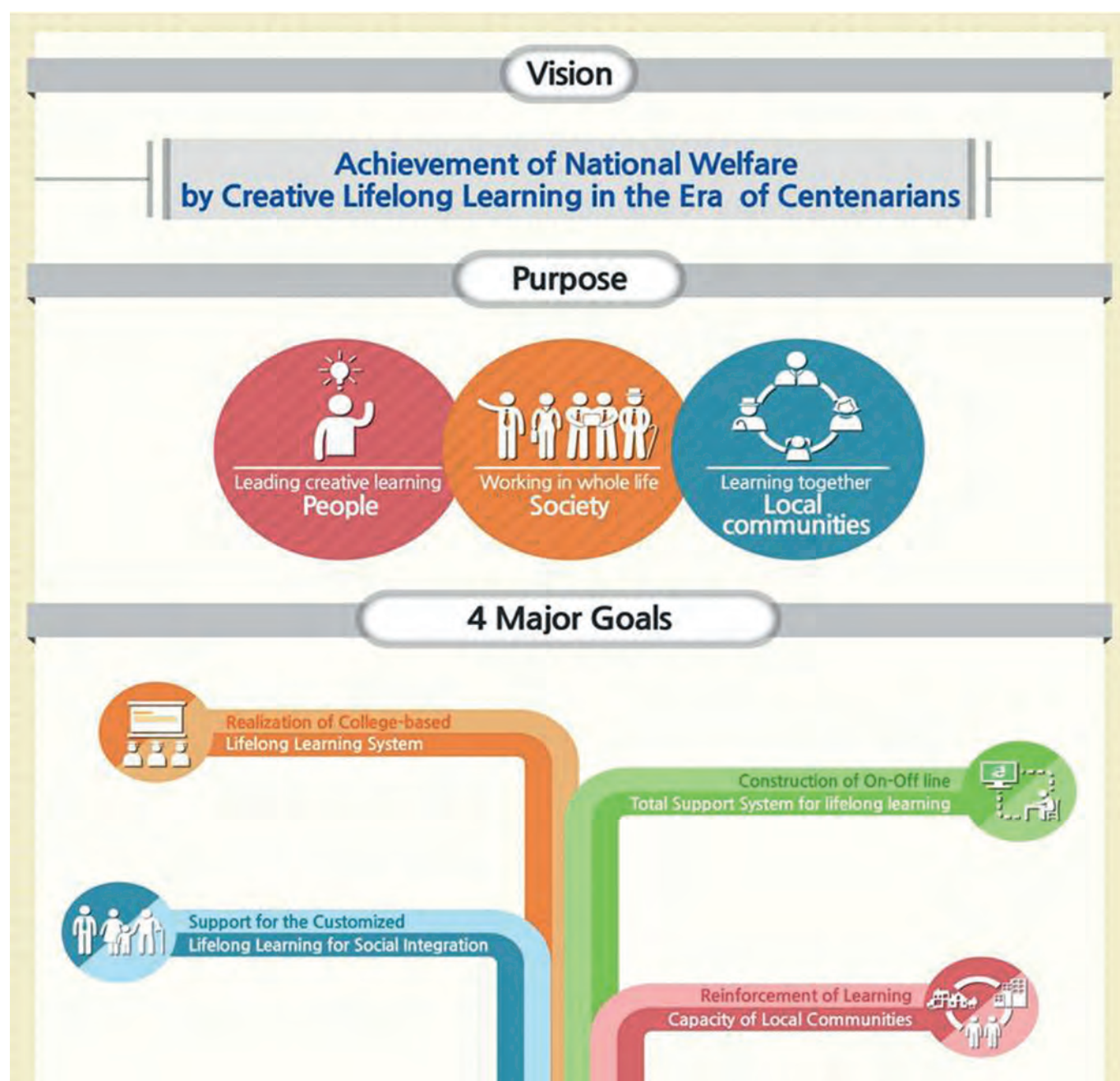
With regard to learning in the workplace, the three countries place importance on linking education and training with skills demanded in the labour market. In Japan, human resource development for the employed and unemployed is overseen by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, while vocational training at secondary and tertiary schools and institutions is the responsibility of MEXT. Likewise, the Ministry of Employment and Labour in the Republic of Korea and the Ministry of Manpower in Singapore are carrying out training and human resource development policies to increase the employability and economic productivity of the labour force.

3.2. Action plans

To translate national policies into concrete measures, the governments have prepared action plans. Specific goals, expected results and performance indicators given in the plans are guiding the implementation, evaluation and improvement of strategies.

Japan's first comprehensive education plan, called the Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education, was designed in 2008 to promote educational reform and is based on the principles of the revised Basic Act for Education. There was a comprehensive plan and a set of expected results and performance

Figure 3: Third National Lifelong Education Promotion Plan's goals for 2017 (Republic of Korea)



indicators for the first five years (2008–2012). What was new in this plan was a systematic procedure involving a cycle of four phases (plan, do, check and act) guided by basic directions laid out in education policy measures. The interim report on the plan for the next five years (2013–2017) envisages the following objectives: (1) nurturing the power to fulfil personal potential and participate fully in society; (2) fostering an innovative workforce that will flourish in the future; (3) developing safety nets for learning; and (4) creating linkages, structures of mutual support and viable communities.

In 2010 the Japanese cabinet approved a programme called New Strategy for Growth. This strategy aims to restore a 'vigorous Japan' and sets goals to be achieved by 2020 in important domains, including education and lifelong learning. These include increasing the number of adult students in universities and professional colleges to 90,000 and 150,000 respectively, and increasing the number of workers engaged in learning for self-enlightenment to 70 per cent of full-time employees and 50 per cent of part-time employees (Sawano, 2012).

Meanwhile, the Republic of Korea is implementing the Third National Lifelong Education Promotion Plan (2013–2017). In line with the Lifelong Education Act, this plan identified three purposes of lifelong education: self-realisation, increased employability and enhanced social integration – and four major goals: realisation of a college-based lifelong learning system, construction of an on- and offline support system, support for customised lifelong learning for social integration, and reinforcement of the learning capacity for local communities, as depicted in Figure 3.

In response to the vision of Thinking Schools, Learning Nation, Singapore's Ministry of Education has issued a document entitled '*Desired Outcomes of Education*', which centres on key competencies for the twenty-first century: critical and inventive thinking, use of ICT, civic literacy, global awareness and cross-cultural skills. Additionally, in 1999 the Ministry of Manpower formulated the Manpower 21 Plan, which addressed continuing education and training outside the school system in a holistic manner and introduced the concept of 'lifelong employability'. This plan was followed by a Master Plan for Continuing Education and Training for the period 2008–2017.

3.3. Governance

In terms of governance, the three countries share the same view that planning and delivery of learning opportunities are better conducted at a local level. The role of

the national ministry, meanwhile, is to act as a 'guardian of standards, ensuring that overall curriculum needs are met and professional training is given to staff' (Ng, 2012: 117). However, the institutional arrangements in the three countries are different.

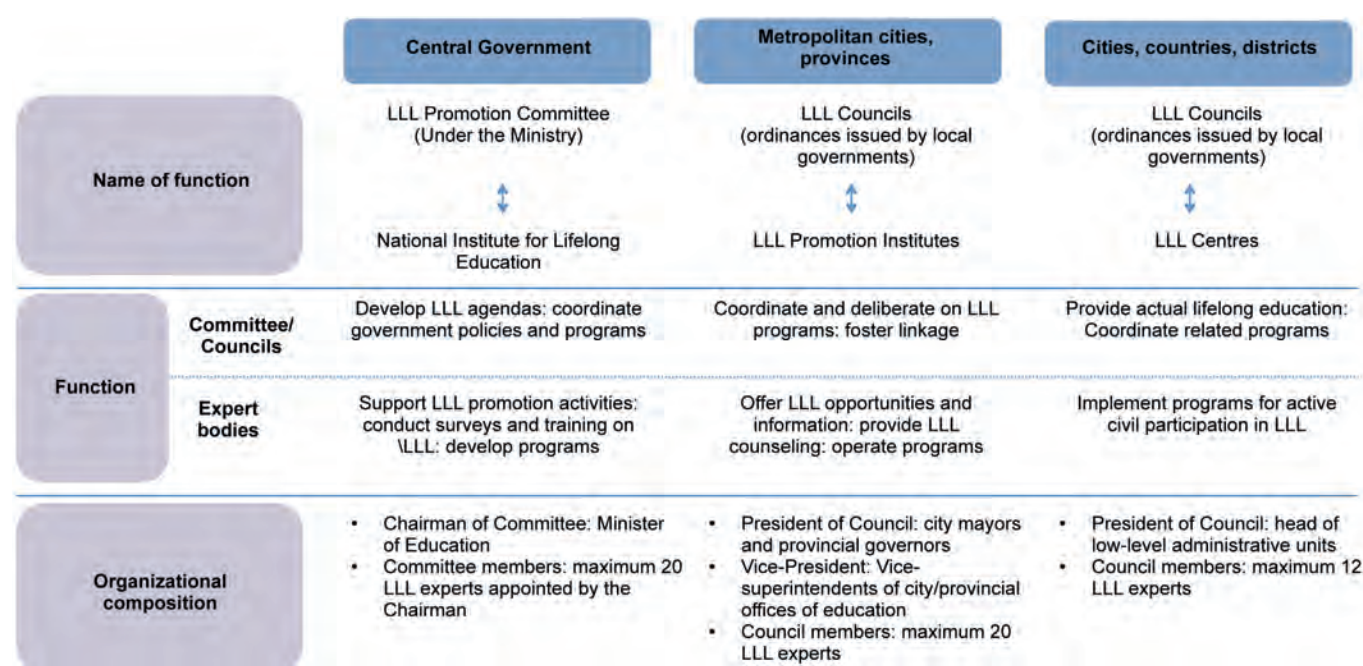
The Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau of MEXT in Japan is responsible for planning education that fosters collaboration among schools, families and communities. One could say that lifelong learning is mainstreamed in educational planning. The bureau has five divisions: (1) policy planning and coordination; (2) analytical research planning; (3) lifelong learning promotion; (4) social education and gender equality learning and (5) educational media and information policy. Various education councils that existed in isolation were reorganised into a Central Education Council to increase synergies in policies and programmes. Vocational training for youth and adults outside the school system is the responsibility of the Human Resources Development Bureau within the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

An autonomous institution, the National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE), was established in the Republic of Korea to perform the nine functions mandated in the Lifelong Education Act and to support the Lifelong Education Committee (Jo, 2012: 3). Two-thirds of the regional governments have provincial or municipal institutes for lifelong learning in place to support the local authorities on a day-to-day basis. The functions and compositions of these implementation agencies at different administrative levels, as defined in the Lifelong Education Act, are illustrated in Figure 4.

In both Japan and the Republic of Korea, lifelong learning councils have been set up at the provincial, district and city levels to coordinate, guide and support the development and implementation of learning programmes.

In the city-state of Singapore, the collaboration and joint efforts of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Manpower are strong at the central level, while a high degree of autonomy is given to schools and workplaces to provide learning opportunities in a flexible and efficient manner. The Ministry of Labour has been reformed and renamed the Ministry of Manpower. Its main mandate is to build a learning nation by improving the competencies and skills of the working-age population. In addition, the Institute for Adult Learning, which is funded by the Workforce Development Agency, was founded to support the professional development of adult educators.

Figure 4: Implementation system for lifelong learning in the Republic of Korea



Source: Jo, 2012: 9

3.4. Financing

One way to measure political will is to examine how much governments are investing in building a learning society. While expenditure figures on lifelong learning as a whole are not available, the public expenditure on education as a percentage of total government spending gives us a good indication. The 2011 figures in Table 6 range from 10 per cent in Japan to 25 per cent in the Republic of Korea. One must note that expenditure on adult education is relatively low; in the Republic of Korea, for example, it amounts to 0.29 per cent of the total education budget (Jo, 2012: 12).

Government funds are supplemented by innovative funding schemes that mobilise resources from the

private sector, such as the Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund in Singapore and the Employment Insurance Fund in the Republic of Korea. Regulations are also in place to encourage private sector and local government investment in lifelong learning. In Japan and the Republic of Korea, 33.6 per cent and 40.4 per cent respectively of total expenditure on educational institutions comes from private sources, including individual families. This is much higher than the OECD average of 16.5 per cent (OECD, 2011: 6). The three countries are committed to promoting an equitable society by enabling all students to achieve the lowest threshold of learning (UNESCO, 2014: 216). Thus public financing prioritises basic education, especially investment in quality teachers. Next section will illustrate some results of these investment in schools, community and workplaces.

Table 6: Public expenditure on education (2011)

	Public expenditure on education as % of GDP	Public expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure	Public expenditure per pupil as % of GDP per capita
Japan	3.8	9.7	23.4
Republic of Korea	5.2	25.0	23.5
Singapore	3.1	20.5	n/a

Source: UIS, 2014



4. KEY ACTIONS AND SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES

Building a learning society will require developing and promoting a comprehensive and diverse range of learning opportunities, especially with regard to quality formal education, community learning, workplace learning and e-learning. The recognition of learning outcomes is also an important component.

4.1. Quality formal education

Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore are all widely lauded for their high-quality formal education system. The findings of a recent OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicate that 15-year-old students in the three countries have a higher learning performance than the average score of OECD countries (Figure 5). Singapore differed from many other OECD countries in that girls performed better than boys in science and maths.

While many things have contributed to these achievements, a key factor is that schools have been made accessible to a mass clientele without compromising the quality of the schooling itself. Quality is preserved in all three countries by maintaining high standards of curriculum design, quality inspection, school management, teacher education and equitable learning achievements.

The high gross enrolment rates in these countries are linked to compulsory education policies. The Republic of Korea introduced a compulsory education period of six years in 1956. This rose to seven years in 1958 and to the current nine years in 1967. Similarly, Japan introduced a four-year period in 1900, increasing this to six years in 1907 and to the present nine years in 1947. In Singapore the compulsory education period is six years. The extension of compulsory education has not only led to a rise in

Figure 5: PISA 2012 key indicators

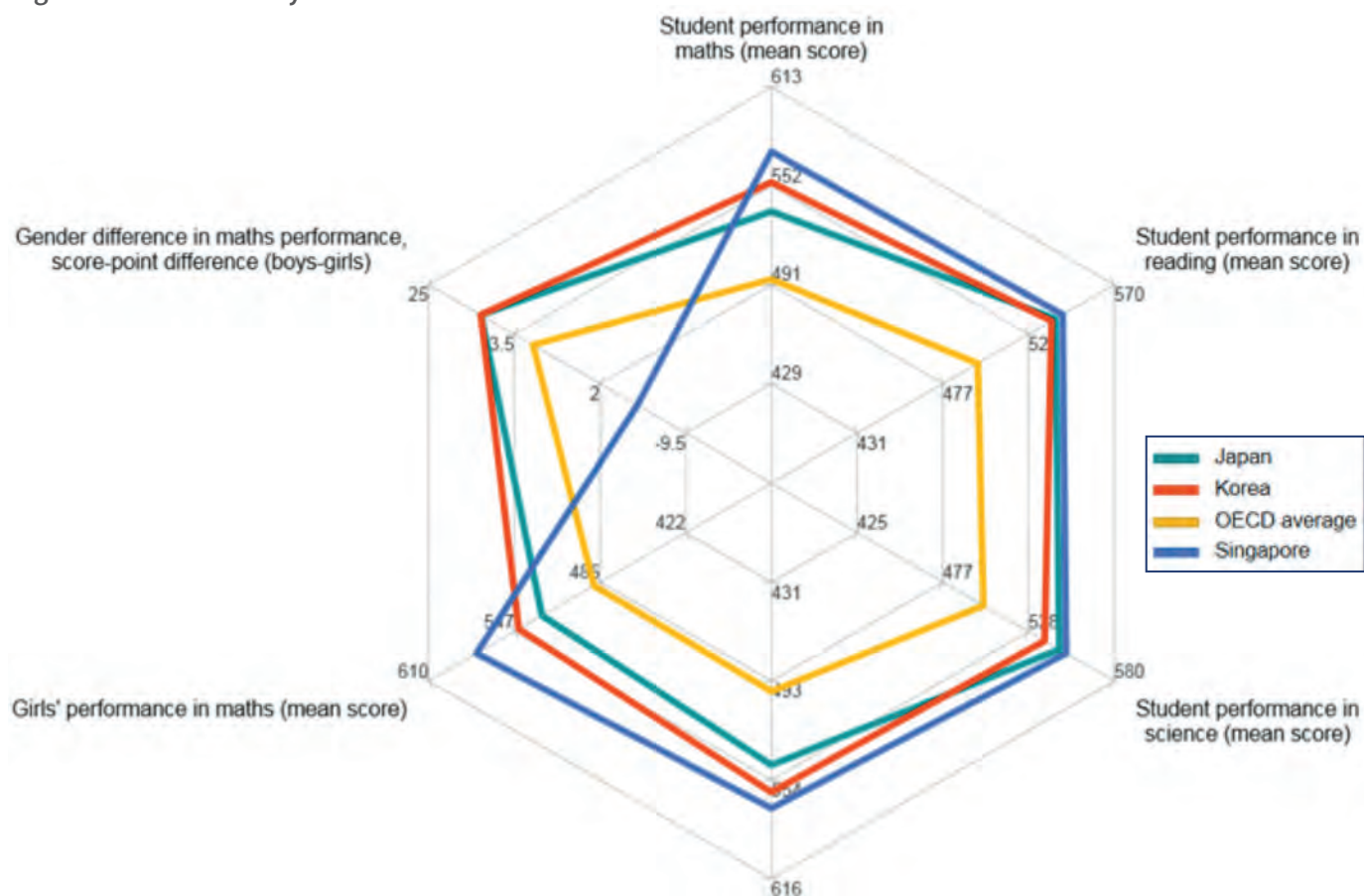


Figure 6: 21st Century Competencies and Desired Student Outcomes (Singapore)



Source: MOE, 2010a

enrolment rates at secondary level, but has also pushed up the figures for higher education (Table 7).

High enrolment rates and generous funding do not automatically result in a superior education system, unless the quality of educational provision is commensurately high. All the three countries uphold high standards of teaching, with well-planned curricula and highly qualified teaching staff. The curriculum is frequently updated, taking into account the best interests of the students and the needs of society as a whole. For example, curriculum reforms in Singapore and the Republic of Korea have addressed the problem, particularly prevalent in Asian countries, of excessive pressure on students to achieve high scores in tests. Both curricula now place less emphasis on formal subject matter and more on creativity and personal development.

Singapore's Ministry of Education (MOE) released a new framework of 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes in 2010 (Figure 6). It identifies specific skills

that should be attained at the end of each stage of education. Rather than focusing on purely academic achievement, the outcomes concentrate on fostering a person to be a confident person, a self-directed learner, an active contributor and a concerned citizen (MOE, 2010b: 2; MOE 2015). Since 2012, MOE has been moving away from an ability-driven education system (Tan, 2005) towards a student-centric, values-driven approach.

Similarly, in the Republic of Korea, the Seventh National Curriculum (launched in 2000) is designed to foster students' creativity, heighten their sense of civic duty and promote their general maturity as young adults (Center on International Education Benchmarking, 2011a). Korea's national curriculum is revised every five to ten years, demonstrating the country's recognition that formal learning agendas must be updated and revised on a regular basis.

Japan's MEXT launched a new programme in 2004 entitled 'Japan! Rise Again!' urging students always to try their best.

The programme involves developing a new national assessment system and improving the overall quality of teachers (Center on International Education Benchmarking, 2011b).

A common feature among the three countries is the respect and esteem accorded to teachers. Furthermore, all three societies recognise the significance of ongoing professional development and regular assessment of educators in order to ensure consistent quality and constant advancement. In Singapore, the government understands the importance of teachers and offers generous benefits to attract people to the profession. They are also given performance bonuses as enticements to work hard and continuously develop professionally (OECD, 2010: 169). Singapore is one of the few countries in which compensation of teachers is based on performance rather than seniority (MOE, 2010a: 13). Most importantly, the government promotes teachers' development and job satisfaction through schemes such as Growth, Recognition, Opportunity and Well-Being (GROW).

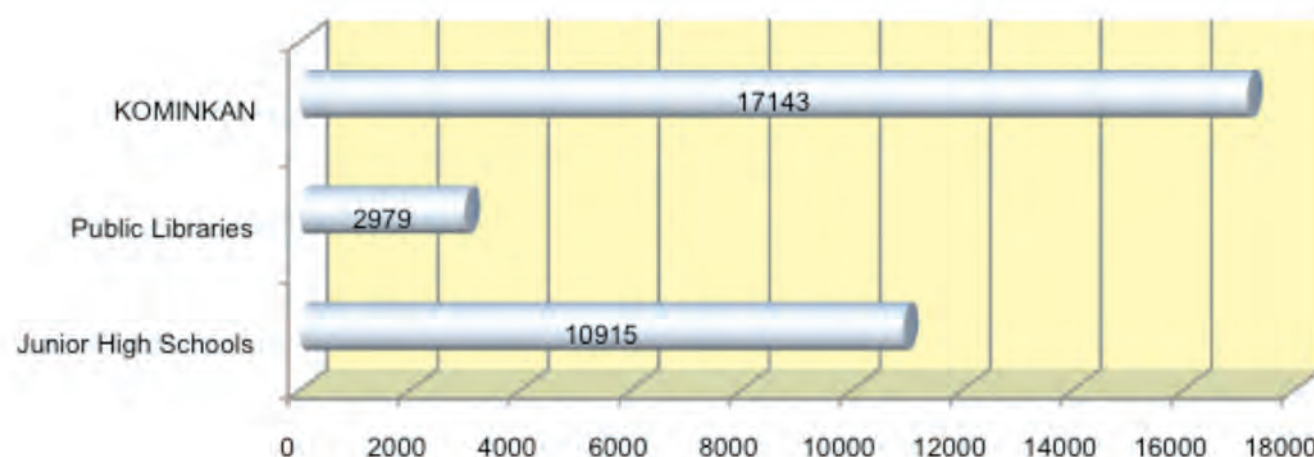
Japan and the Republic of Korea also hold teachers in high regard. Salaries are competitive and there are incentives to teachers to keep upskilling. In the Republic of Korea, teachers are paid well, typically earning US\$52,699 at their mid-career mark, considerably more than the OECD average of \$41,701 (Center on

International Education Benchmarking, 2011a). Japan's educators also gross around \$9,000 more than their OECD counterparts. Entry to the profession in Japan is not easy. Studying to become a teacher involves passing difficult examinations and assessments (Center on International Education Benchmarking, 2011b). Both Japan and the Republic of Korea are also committed to the professional development of teachers, thereby further contributing to the high quality of formal education. Teachers in the Republic of Korea are encouraged to complete professional development programmes in order to earn certificates that qualify them for promotions and pay increases. In Japan, MEXT introduced a new system in 2009 requiring teachers to demonstrate every ten years that their skills are up to date before they can renew their teaching certificates (Center on International Education Benchmarking, 2011b).

While formal schooling is only one of the building blocks of a learning society, a consistently top-grade education system serves as the foundation of a thriving learning culture. The three national studies demonstrate that, in order to achieve successful formal learning practices, schooling must be: (1) widely accessible and valued by the community; (2) mandatory for all young citizens; (3) sufficiently financed by the government; and (4) subject to constant quality maintenance.

Table 7: Gross enrolment ratios for primary, secondary and higher education (%)

		1980	1990	2000	2010	2012
Japan	Primary education	102.1	101.6	101.0	102.2	102.3
	Secondary education	92.5	95.6	101.8	101.6	101.8
	Higher education	31.2	29.7	48.7	58.1	61.5
Republic of Korea	Primary education	105.2	106.0	101.8	103.2	102.7
	Secondary education	76.8	92.6	98.9	97.1	97.2
	Higher education	12.8	36.9	78.8	101.0	98.4
Singapore	Primary education	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Secondary education	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Higher education	5.9	23.5	45.3	71.0	81.3
World average	Primary education	97.1	99.8	98.2	108.4	108.4
	Secondary education	47.2	49.9	59.4	70.9	72.9
	Higher education	12.3	13.6	19.0	29.2	32.0

Figure 7: Number of social education facilities in Japan (2008)

Source: Sasai, 2012

4.2. Learning cities and community-based learning

A learning society must be built using a bottom-up approach and has to be based on a strong sense of collective identity. It entails the support and involvement of regions, cities, districts and local communities. All three societies in question have a policy of supporting valuable networks of community-based learning spaces, centres and organisations. Such public facilities play a vital role in creating a learning environment.

As early as 1979, the city of Kakegawa – one of the seven cities that participated in the OECD Educating Cities initiative in 1973 – was declared Japan's first lifelong learning city. In Kakegawa, lifelong learning was not just about having learning opportunities throughout one's life. It was also about continuing to learn systematically and using the acquired knowledge in community and personal development. Since then, the Japanese lifelong learning city project has been implemented at various municipal levels as part of the policy for promoting lifelong learning. The project has already had a very positive impact on education, productivity, innovation and economic activity at the local level. It is also recognised as a major policy agenda by administrators and politicians (Choi, 2008).

In the Republic of Korea, following the enactment of the 1999 Lifelong Education Law – which states that the 'government can designate and support selected municipalities, districts, and counties as lifelong learning

cities' – the government immediately put the law into practice. In 2001, the first three cities were selected and announced as 'lifelong learning cities' (Han, 2011). As of 2014, a total of 129 local government districts (municipalities, city districts and rural counties) have been designated as 'lifelong learning cities'. This accounts for about half of the total 229 local governments nationwide. Most importantly, city managers have recognised that a learning city not only provides enhanced education and learning opportunities, but also makes the city smarter and more communicative.

This is evident in all three countries in question, where community learning centres (CLCs) and cultural institutions are numerous. Through the provision of community centres and educational spaces, people are motivated to make use of the ample resources of these centres in their spare time, thereby helping to foster a learning culture.

Japan's community learning sphere is far-reaching, particularly due to its many educational spaces and facilities. As shown in Figure 7, the community centres, known as 'Kominkan', significantly outnumber public libraries and junior high schools. The Kominkan were first initiated as public meeting halls after the Second World War and have since evolved into hubs of lifelong learning (Sasai, 2012), offering facilities such as classrooms, gymnasiums, meeting rooms and libraries. Citizens are actively involved in the management of the centres, and learning activities are organised for different age groups, which facilitates intergenerational learning. Kominkan work in partnership with local entities including schools, NGOs and museums (MEXT, 2008).

Table 8 demonstrates the aims of the Kominkan when they were established. Although the centres have had to adapt to changing times, they have preserved their founding principles. The Kominkan strive to cultivate many forms and domains of learning, covering such areas as social learning, personal development, cultural immersion and civic issues. Participation in learning events and courses is free or carries a nominal charge.

The Japanese have also devised an innovative and effective mode of community learning in the form of Citizens' Universities. These universities, which were established in

the 1970s after the concept of lifelong learning was introduced in Japan, offer lectures and courses to community members of all ages on various subjects. Although the Citizens' Universities were originally government-run, they are increasingly being managed by the citizens themselves (Sawano, 2012: 669). This is an impressive example of what can be achieved through community members' eagerness to learn and promote lifelong learning. Of the 150 Citizens' Universities throughout Japan, a particularly commendable example is the Kiyomigata Daigaku Juku in Shizuoka City. The original purpose of this Citizens' University when it was founded in 1985

Table 8: Basic functions of Kominkan (Japan)

<p>1. INSTITUTIONS OF SOCIAL EDUCATION Kominkan are democratic non-formal educational institutions.</p>	<p>5. PLACES FOR CULTURAL EXCHANGE As places for exchanges between 'contemporary culture' and 'traditional culture,' or 'academic culture' and 'life culture', Kominkan must strive to be up to date, yet at the same time hand down the traditional culture of the community to its residents, especially younger residents.</p>
<p>2. PLACES FOR BUILDING SOLIDARITY AMONG COMMUNITY MEMBERS Kominkan aim to foster community solidarity by strengthening bonds between residents and cultivating a spirit of mutual assistance.</p>	<p>6. PLACES TO STRIVE FOR THE POSITIVE COOPERATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE Because it is above all young people who should act as the driving force in community development, efforts must be made to encourage their positive participation in the creation and management of Kominkan.</p>
<p>3. A DRIVING FORCE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF LOCAL INDUSTRY By enhancing residents' culture and knowledge, Kominkan help to advance local industry in the community.</p>	<p>7. BASES FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT Kominkan constitute a fundamental tool for community development. They must therefore meet the everyday needs of their communities.</p>
<p>4. PLACES IN WHICH TO LEARN ABOUT DEMOCRACY As what one might call 'training grounds for local democracy', Kominkan must be managed with strict adherence to the principles of equality and respect for basic human rights.</p>	

was to provide learning opportunities for older people. The founding members decided to recruit the instructors exclusively from the local community. Also notable is the fact that the university is run strictly on a volunteer basis. In 2008 there were 99 lecturers, 3,360 learners and 152 courses (Sawano, 2012: 671).

In Singapore, community initiatives are powered mainly by bodies known as Community Development Councils (CDCs). CDCs are organised on a district basis and are responsible for developing and implementing community programmes and events that promote lifelong learning and social cohesion. The CDCs also focus on assisting marginalised families. Funding for CDCs comes from donations and the government. Each CDC is awarded S\$1 annually for every resident living in its district; furthermore, the government awards an additional S\$3 for every S\$1 that is donated. There are five CDCs for the five districts in Singapore, and membership of each council ranges from twelve to eighty representatives, with the mayor heading the group (CDC, 2010). Singapore's government, the People's Association (PA), also supports 106 Community Clubs throughout the country. These clubs provide community resources, such as athletic facilities and computer rooms, as well as various courses for the general public ranging from cake-baking to film-editing (People's Association Singapore, 2009).

Lifelong education institutions are the backbone of community learning in the Republic of Korea. They are administered by NGOs, community centres, cultural institutions and universities. These lifelong education institutions, of which there are currently over 22,000 throughout the country, provide an array of programmes, ranging from literacy classes to art courses. Some community learning involves partnership with the school system. For example, the Korean Association for Community Education (KACE) has collaborated with public schools to design programmes especially targeted at families. These counsel parents and provide after-school facilities for students. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education (MOE) and local education offices have worked to utilise local schools as community learning centres, especially in rural areas. These initiatives reflect MOE's lifelong education strategy of promoting synergies between schools and local communities (Jo, 2012: 12).

The availability, magnitude and quality of community learning are a direct reflection of how advanced a learning society is. Implementation measures such as

community clubs reveal the extent to which community members understand and practise the concepts of life-long learning and a learning culture. In all the examples provided above, community learning has several pre-requisites. Firstly, community bodies such as schools and cultural institutions must support the clubs financially, educationally and administratively. Secondly, the clubs should be located at community level and thirdly, they should involve the contribution of community members themselves. Fourthly, since community learning is largely a personal and self-driven practice, citizens' motivation to learn must be based on a desire to grow as individuals, as there is usually no immediate and tangible reward for learning. Providing the necessary motivation is a challenge that all three countries are striving to meet.

4.3. Workplace learning

Learning within the workforce depends on the willing collaboration of the employer and employee. It also required the right motivation along with external support and funding from appropriate agencies. The practice of regular training and constant upskilling benefits employees, the companies they work for and ultimately society as a whole.

Singapore's workplace learning programme has substantial financial and organisational backing. Skills development is provided for by the Skills Development Fund (SDF), which is financed by the Skills Development Levy (SDL), a tax of 0.25 per cent deducted by each employer from the employee's gross monthly pay (WDA, 2012). This tax subsidises training costs, thus providing an incentive for both employees and employers where training is concerned. The prospect of increased productivity is an incentive to employers to make their own contribution. A further source of motivation for employers is the National Training Award Scheme, which recognises and rewards companies for excellence in employee training. This system of government recognition has resulted in a steady overall increase in average corporate training budgets which is a significant achievement (Kuruville et al., 2001: 16). A further initiative, which specifically assists low-salary workers, is the Workfare Training Scheme (WTS). This provides monetary incentives to employers to subsidise training for low-skilled, low-wage workers. WTS rewards employers who subsidise such employees' training by covering these employees' salaries while they are away (Ng, 2012: 13). Furthermore, WTS motivates workers to take part in training programmes by granting a financial reward for each completed skill qualification.

An effective mechanism external to the traditional workplace is the Council for Professional and Technical Education (CPTE). CPTE is a self-governing organisation that works to ensure that there is enough human capital to meet the economy's needs. On the macro level, CPTE formulates the skills training to be provided at various training institutions. Subsequently, the government collaborates with the private sector to promote these training centres and programmes for employees. In order to encourage companies to be involved in training their employees, the government guarantees that the employees concerned will only work for the firms that provide their training (Kuruvilla et al., 2001: 22). The overall result of these policies is a win-win situation for all concerned.

The Republic of Korea's workplace training system operates through the Employment Insurance (EI) scheme, a national programme funded by training levies. The EI system is similar to Singapore's SDF in that it also offers financial incentives to employers to provide subsidised training for their employees (Ra, 2009: 18). Table 9 below displays the types of programme funded by EI based on the needs of employers, employees and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Although these funds benefit all categories of worker, demand has increased for initial workplace training for younger people. These programmes have proved to be influential, as assessments show that participants require less time to find a job after completion and stay longer at

their first jobs than those who have not participated in the programmes (OECD, 2009).

Workplace learning in Japan is a time-honoured tradition. Although a national rebate and levy system is used, Japan's case differs from the Republic of Korea and Singapore in that the funding and provision of training is largely the responsibility of employers and large corporations. This is due to Japan's long-standing recognition of the importance of regularly upgrading workers' skills to ensure the success of their companies. Japanese employers tend to take it upon themselves to conduct on-the-job training for their employees rather than using external training programmes (Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2012). This has the added benefit of enhancing commitment and loyalty to the company. However, the slow growth of the economy since the 1990s is changing the work culture and hence workplace learning in Japan. The increasing number of part-time and temporary employees is making it more difficult for SMEs to provide on-the-job training. 'A culture of independent self-learning' among employees is replacing employer-dependent workplace learning in Japan (Hirata and Ibuchi, 2012: 55).

As a measure of safety net for non-regular employees and unemployed, the 9th Basic Vocational Ability Development Plan (2011–2015) by the Ministry of

Table 9: Support programmes from the Employment Insurance Fund (Republic of Korea)

Expenses paid			Costs covered by loans	
Employers	Training and education covered by organisations	Paid learning leave	Training facilities or equipment	In-house qualification certification
Employees	Taking classes at college or vocational training institutes	Preparation for qualification certification	Higher education and training	
SMEs	Training consortium	Learning organisation programme		

Table 10: Internet users (per 100 people)

	2000	2010	2013
Japan	30.0	78.2	86.3
Republic of Korea	44.7	83.7	84.8
Singapore	36.0	71.0	73.0
World average	6.8	29.3	38.1

Source: World Bank, 2014

Health, Labour and Welfare introduced Job Seeker Support System and Job Card System. Under the first system, free vocational training and benefits are provided to job seekers who are no longer eligible to receive unemployment insurance (after 6-months). Job cards are issued to individuals to keep records of vocational training and abilities. The cards are used by recruiters and career counsellors. Special measures to encourage women to join the workforce are being introduced but its effectiveness is yet to be seen.

Assessment of skills in manufacturing is supervised by the Japan Vocational Ability Development Association (JAVADA). In partnership with Prefectural Vocational Ability Development Associations, JAVADA provides certification covering over 125 trades at four levels (superior, first, second and third) from beginners with 6-month experience to highly advanced skilled workers with over 15 years of experience (JAVADA, 2008).

4.4. ICT and e-learning

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is having a profound influence on the growth of learning societies. As shown in Table 10, the number of internet users per 100 people in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore has approximately doubled since 2000. ICT advancements are making learning more convenient and accessible to a wider range of learners. Hence these technologies have enormous potential for building a more cohesive and robust learning society. A particularly groundbreaking result of ICT development is the e-learning, which has influenced all sectors of learning in the three societies, from formal learning to workplace learning. E-learning is continually opening new doors and opportunities with regard to accessibility, knowledge expansion and educational development.

E-learning has especially impacted on the formal learning sphere, giving rise to the increasing use of distance learning, which allows for individuals to take courses and attend lectures online. Essentially, it is possible for citizens to attend school in virtual reality. This is extremely beneficial to learners who have families, jobs and busy schedules. An example of successful e-learning practice is the Singapore Institute of Management University (UniSIM), the only form of higher education in Singapore that particularly targets adult learners who have to adapt their study programmes to work schedules and family life. This is made possible through online courses that can be taken at home. It is anticipated that e-learning will account for 50 per cent of all courses within the next five years. Currently, UniSIM's total number of students is 10,800, with three out of five graduates receiving an average pay increase of 21 per cent on graduation, considerably higher than the national average of 7.6 per cent for students graduating from other institutions (UniSIM, 2011).

The Korean National Open University also tailors its programmes to individuals' needs, offering online lectures and interactive distance lectures. Some 70 per cent of its students are in employment. There are also various cyber universities that make it possible to work and study at the same time. As of 2011, there were sixteen four-year cyber universities with 103,917 students enrolled and two cyber universities offering two-year programmes with 3,577 students enrolled (Jo, 2012: 16). E-learning is also provided by the Air and Correspondence High Schools. These are affiliated with public high schools that provide courses via broadcasts and other forms of distance communication. These high schools hope to create a lifelong cyber-learning system that is accessible to anyone, anywhere and at any time (Lee, 2012: 292). A new development by the Korean Government is the K-MOOC national initiative, a Korean model of Massive Open Online Courses. This will provide lectures and courses based on the latest teaching and learning methods, such as blended learning and its own 'Flipped Learning' model.

Japan's first online university, the Cyber University, is another good example of a four-year degree institution providing classes via computers and even mobile phones. As in the case of the Korean National Open University, the majority of the 2,000 students are in their late 20s and early 30s and hold full-time jobs (Ogden, 2010). There is also the Open University of

Japan (OUJ), which enables working adults to develop their qualifications and competencies, thereby improving their employment prospects and salaries (Lee, 2012: 293). This is made possible by a combination of e-learning and evening and weekend classes.

Singapore has invested heavily in its infrastructural capital with the aim of becoming an 'intelligent island'. Its iN2015 strategy is a ten-year master plan to develop the information and communications sector and build a society with optimum connectivity. Launched in 2006, the iN2015 initiative identifies the potential that the latest technologies offer Singapore's industries, economy and society. With its excellent ICT infrastructure and a liberalised telecommunications market, Singapore is at the cutting edge of the information age (Ng, 2012).

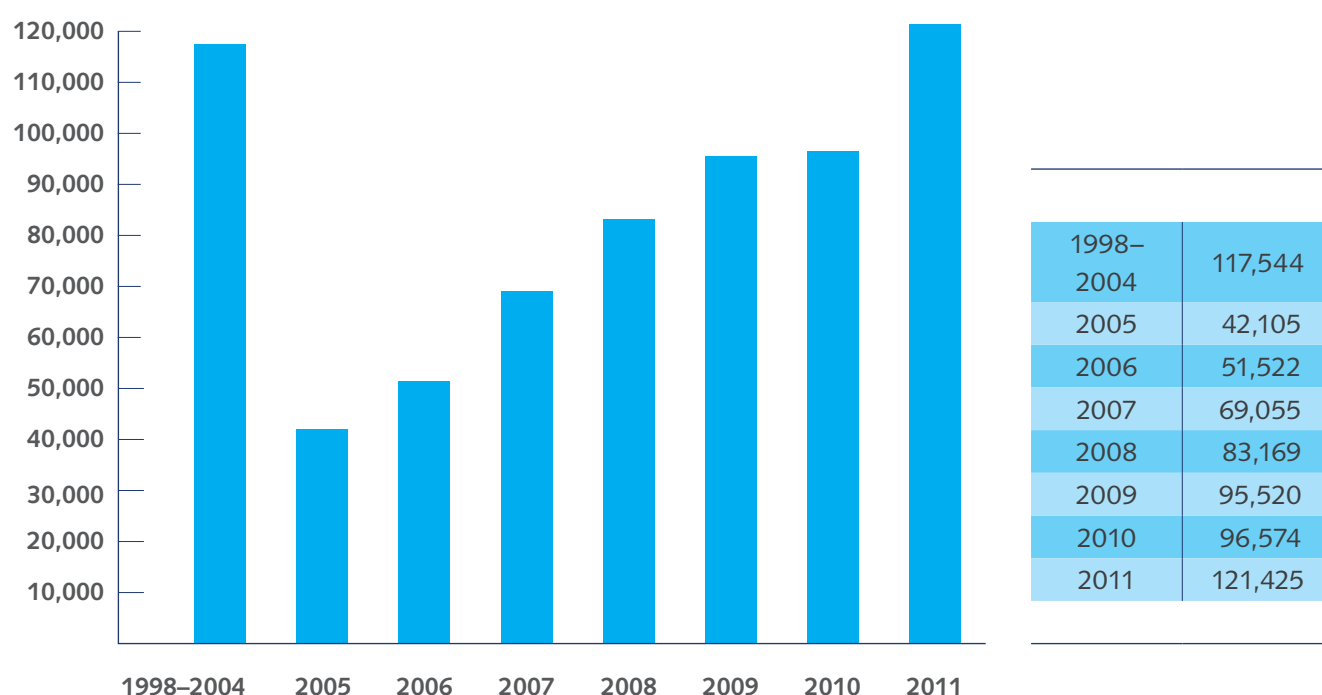
ICT is also essential in the workplace when building a comprehensive learning society, as it provides workers with the up-to-date skills necessary for thriving in a knowledge-based economy. In Singapore, the Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) has drawn up a plan entitled the Infocomm Manpower Development Roadmap Version 2.0 to compete in information and communication services at global level (IDA 2011). In order to achieve this goal, the IDA has put into practice several strategies to educate at secondary and tertiary schools and to enhance skills of professionals.

An example of Japan's innovative promotion of ICT in the workplace is the Japan OpenCourseWare Consortium (JOCW). This allows for universities and corporations across the country to share learning resources and information over the internet, creating a sort of database for the nation. The content is monitored by the Accreditation Council for Practical Abilities (ACPA), which ensures that the material is of high quality (Lee, 2012: 314). Furthermore, Japan's e-learning programmes strive to aid all sectors of society, including civil servants, military personnel and the socially marginalised.

Overall, it seems that the Republic of Korea has made the most impact regarding e-learning in the workplace. Its great progress is due in part to the government, which has recognised that ICT in the workplace must be developed in order to create an information-based society. From a quantitative point of view, corporate e-learning has increased from about 20,000 participants in 1999 to 1.25 million in 2005 (Lim, 2007). E-learning in the workplace largely takes place through tutorial training, which includes work-oriented examples and problems.

While policies and action plans are essential in building a learning society, it is clear that nothing can come to fruition unless the full potential of ICT is exploited. Great investments need to be made in the ICT sector

Figure 8: Number of enrolled learners in the Academic Credit Bank System, Republic of Korea (1998–2011)



if societies are to adapt to today's constantly evolving social, technical and economic environment. Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore have, in different ways, successfully integrated e-learning into both formal education and community and workplace learning. Although implementing ICT schemes is very costly, the investment is amply repaid in terms of enhanced accessibility and expanded opportunities for all learners.

4.5. Recognising learning outcomes

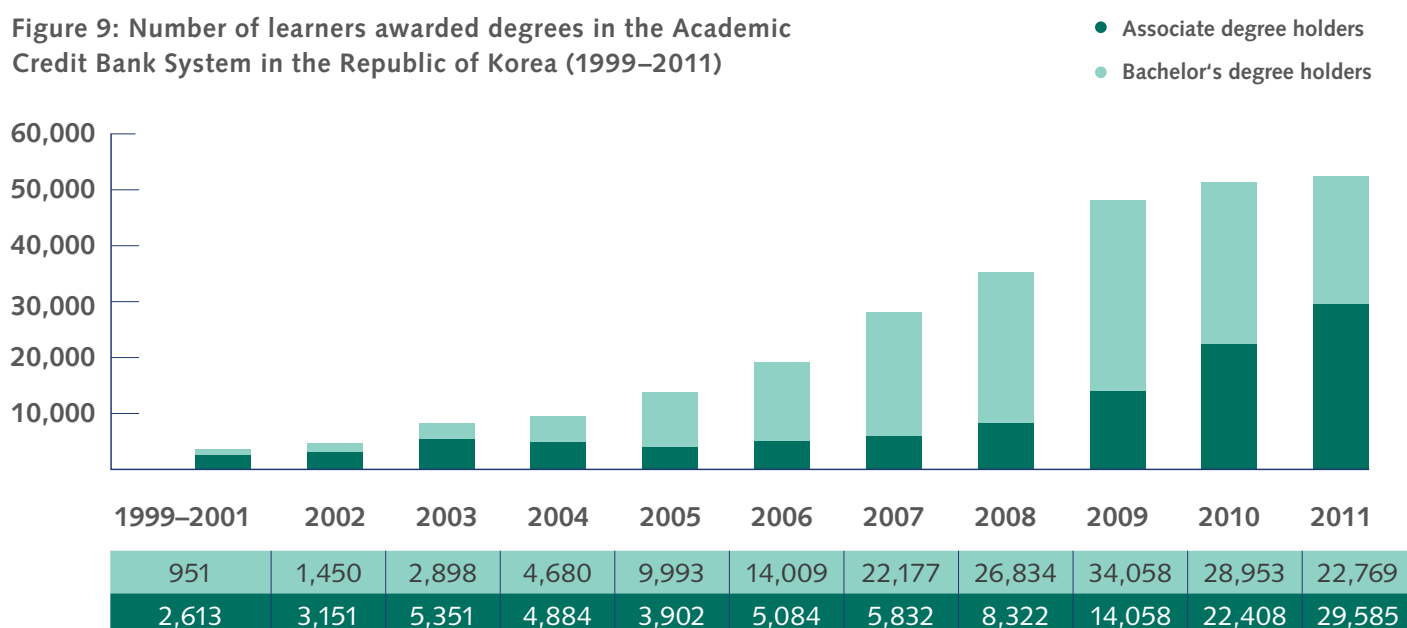
A comprehensive qualifications and standardisation framework is crucial, as it informs learners of their specific achievements, provides measurements of non-formal learning and gives learners proof of achievement that is formally recognised by the government. This increases learners' motivation, and previously unquantified and unrecognised learning accomplishments are turned into tangible markers and values. Such a framework is therefore an essential component of a learning culture.

The Republic of Korea's Academic Credit Bank System (ACBS) is an impressive programme that identifies and recognises various learning experiences. Learners can acquire academic credits by: (1) completing approved courses; (2) acquiring national certificates; (3) taking an examination for a self-education bachelor's degree or taking examination-exempted courses; (4) taking courses at accredited colleges; (5) accumulating educational credits by the hour; and (6) being apprentices or active learners of intangible cultural properties (Jo, 2012: 13).

The recognition of 'intangible cultural properties' especially is a huge leap, as it acknowledges learning other than formal schooling and training. ACBS even allows for bachelor's degrees to be awarded to individuals who have high school diplomas or who have the same academic aptitude as high school graduates (Lee, 2012: 293). These policies bear witness to a society embracing and accepting lifelong learning and placing due value on non-conventional forms of learning. The statistics in Figure 8 below show the success of ACBS, as demonstrated by the increasing number of learners taking advantage of the scheme since 1998. Figure 9 shows the increasing number of associate and bachelor degrees awarded to adult learners.

Singapore's Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) scheme is the framework responsible for training and assessing citizens' aptitudes. Based on a national credential system it evaluates and coaches skills that are transferable and applicable to all companies (Ng, 2011: 9). WSQ grants certificates and diplomas to workers who complete training courses, thereby providing incentives and rewards for upskilling (WDA, 2010). Credentials are based on WSQ industry frameworks a set of thirty frameworks listing the skills that individuals should hold for their specific industrial sector. These training guidelines are classified into seven different levels of nationally recognised qualifications, ranging from certificate to graduate diploma, thus motivating workers to attain as high a qualification as possible (WDA, 2011). Furthermore, in order to standardise the requirements for earning credentials, WDA has

Figure 9: Number of learners awarded degrees in the Academic Credit Bank System in the Republic of Korea (1999–2011)





developed procedures and criteria of quality assurance. The proportion of companies taking advantage of WSQ was at 20.6 per cent in 2010, up from 12.3 per cent in 2009 (WDA, 2010).

Japan's workplace education also employs a qualifications framework, the National Trade Skill Testing and Certification System. This government-endorsed system assesses the knowledge and skills of workers and measures their competencies based on a uniform set of standards. The scheme, which began in 1959, tests people in 195 different industries. As of 2008, approximately

3.09 million individuals have benefited from this certification system. Qualifications awarded through the system confer validity and social recognition, and give firms confidence in their employees' capabilities. Employees who have received qualification are officially recognised by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare as 'certified skilled workers' (JAVADA, 2008).

Recognition and accreditation schemes like the ones described above have proved to be of immense benefit to both employers and employees, and are now recognised as an essential component of a learning society.

5. LESSONS LEARNED

As the foregoing overview demonstrates, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore attach great importance to developing a lifelong learning system. They are moving steadily towards their goals of realising a Lifelong Learning Society (Japan), a Learning Society (the Republic of Korea) and a Learning Nation (Singapore), in which all people can participate in learning opportunities at any time during their lives and receive recognition for their achievements. Although the three countries have adopted different policies and strategies in the process, some common lessons can be drawn from their endeavours.

5.1. Building a learning society entails the formulation of a comprehensive concept of lifelong learning

In the mid-1980s, the term 'lifelong learning' was generally used in Japan to refer to adult education. In recent years, however, the concept has been broadened. The Basic Act on Education, amended in 2006, now states: 'Society shall be made to allow all citizens to continue to learn throughout their lives, on all occasions and in all places, and apply the outcomes of lifelong learning appropriately to refine themselves and lead a fulfilling life' (MEXT 2006, Article 3). In Singapore, the Thinking Schools, Learning Nation vision begins by recognising that education is a continuum, starting with the early pre-school years and continuing throughout life (Goh, 1997). Learning Nation is a vision of a total learning environment where learning permeates every level of society and is not confined to schools and educational institutions (Ng, 2012). In the Republic of Korea, the Learning Society is defined as one in which anyone can learn, anywhere and at any time (Choi, 2008).

5.2. A learning society attaches importance to both quantitative expansion and quality enhancement of its lifelong learning system

As indicated in previous sections, enrolment at all levels of education has increased dramatically since the 1960s in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore. Usually, enrolment rates and public expenditure on education are used to show evidence of high human capital

accumulation. However, these variables reveal nothing about the content and quality of education, which are more important than quantitative growth (Page, 1994). The three countries have not been content with purely quantitative expansion of their education systems; they have also made great efforts to enhance the quality of education. They have achieved remarkable success in this regard. For example, along with their peers in Finland, students of Singapore and the Republic of Korea regularly top international comparisons of educational standards such as PISA.

The central focus of lifelong learning requires a paradigm shift away from the ideas of teaching and training towards the concept of learning. This involves moving away from teacher-centred approaches that focus on conveying knowledge towards learner-centred approaches that emphasise learning for personal development, active citizenship, employability and social inclusion. Even the acquisition of special skills can become a broader process of discovery and unfold creative potential. In implementing its Thinking Schools, Learning Nation vision Singapore has formulated Desired Outcomes of Education that move away from the earlier ability-driven education paradigm to reflect a more student-centric, values-driven approach.

The quality of teachers and educators has an important bearing on the quality of lifelong learning. The three countries have spared no efforts in enhancing the quality of teachers and educators. As already discussed, teachers in Singapore are carefully selected from the top third of each cohort and offered competitive salaries. They are also given performance bonuses as an incentive to work hard and develop professionally on an ongoing basis (OECD, 2010: 169). In the Republic of Korea, the Lifelong Education Act stipulates that at least one lifelong education professional must be assigned to each local lifelong education centre and lifelong education facility. The act also specifies which lifelong education-related courses and internships must be completed before one can become a lifelong education professional. NILE also conducts further training to continuously upgrade the skills of these professionals. In Japan, the Social Education Act set up a specific certification system along with further training requirements for professional personnel working in social education.

5.3. A learning society strives to develop an equitable and inclusive lifelong learning system

The Japanese Government has made it clear that, in order for society to achieve sustainable development while maintaining fairness and vitality, it is necessary not only to pursue socio-economic sustainability but also to promote ethical values and human skills such as the ability to live in harmony with other people (Government of Japan, 2008). *Kominkan* (community centres), for example, have a key role to play in preparing foreign migrant residents for their work and life in Japan and improving their language and communication skills.

As indicated in the case study report on the Republic of Korea (Jo, 2012), the local governments of each region are encouraged to open and operate lifelong education programmes for marginalised groups, including foreign immigrants, homeless people, prison inmates and people on low incomes. The government has implemented a project entitled Lifelong Education for Supporting the Socially Marginalised, which has supported 47 programmes at 39 institutions in 21 local governments as of 2011 (NILE, 2012). Lifelong education programmes for the socially marginalised are not limited to supplementing educational background or developing basic vocational skills, but have become much broader in scope. More human goals, such as establishing self-identity and enhancing self-confidence, are now also recognised as important outcomes.

In Singapore, the increased accessibility of formal learning is due in part to initiatives that reach out to the socially marginalised. The country has also made great strides in guaranteeing that education is possible for everyone, regardless of their financial situation. For instance, Student Care Centres (SCCs) serve as a major support system for children from disadvantaged families (MOE, 2010b: 8). As Singapore is experiencing growing economic disparity among citizens (Ng, 2011: 10), the Workfare Training Scheme (WTS) is now paying more attention to helping low-income employment sectors. In the communities, organisations such as HOPE Singapore have sponsored Family Life Education Centres (FLEC) and Family Life Centres (FLC) to assist marginalised families.

5.4. A learning society relies on the active participation of all stakeholders

It is important to be able to adapt to the rapid changes of today's world while leading a full and healthy life. In

order to do so, we need social mechanisms that enable us to enjoy learning throughout life and utilise what we learn – both as individuals and as members of society. In Japan, the Lifelong Learning Promotion Law (1990) stipulated the establishment of Lifelong Learning Councils at national and prefectural levels. Japan also established the National Advisory Committee for Lifelong Learning (NACLL) as part of the Central Council for Education.

Throughout Singapore's history, there has been strong tripartite participation in social dialogue and institutional governance. For example, the three key partners of the Skills Development Fund Council are employers, employees and the government. The willingness and commitment of all stakeholders to work together in a spirit of overall consensus has brought impressive results. The tripartite involvement is particularly evident in the learning sphere and the workforce, where it serves as an extremely effective coordinating mechanism. It is also worth noting that there is a trend towards public-private partnerships with an emphasis on adult and lifelong learning. This has meant that adult learners now have more options if they wish to continue their education.

The Lifelong Education Promotion Committee has been established in the Republic of Korea. The committee is chaired by the Minister of Education and its permanent members include the President of the National Institute for Lifelong Education and the vice ministers of the relevant central government ministries. The committee is responsible for deliberating on national lifelong learning promotion plans, which are established every five years by the Ministry of Education. It also reviews and promotes schemes to improve Korea's lifelong education system and promote a culture of lifelong learning.

5.5. A learning society needs to be underpinned by learning regions, cities and communities

Lifelong learning occurs in close connection with the lives and individual demands of learners. It is very difficult, however, for the national government to look into the lives of learners and respond to these in national policies and strategies (Jo, 2012). Therefore, a decentralised approach is necessary to ensure a diverse range of lifelong learning opportunities at local levels. As a flagship project in the Republic of Korea, the Lifelong Learning City Project has effectively stimulated local governments to expand lifelong learning opportunities, improve the

quality of education services and facilitate cooperation between different institutions, such as governmental agencies, schools, public libraries and community centres.

In Japan, the revised Basic Act on Education stipulates that local governments are responsible for implementing education that suits regional needs and circumstances and also for improving the quality of their educational practices. Local governments are expected to act autonomously with regard to education (Government of Japan, 2008). In addition to the ubiquitous Kominkan (community learning centres) in Japan, citizens' universities are emerging. These 'recycle knowledge' throughout their communities and seek to improve community life through mutual teaching and learning (Sawano, 2012).

In Singapore, community initiatives are powered by the Community Development Council (CDC), which is divided by district and responsible for developing and implementing community programmes and events promoting lifelong learning and social cohesion. Each council is headed by the Mayor and comprises between twelve and eighty representatives. Community learning centres, family life education centres and community clubs have been established to provide various learning and recreation opportunities for the general public.

5.6. The policy of building a learning society needs to be backed up by financial resources

Although the benefits of a learning society are obvious, such a society cannot be built without financial backing. This is clear from the case studies on Singapore and the Republic of Korea. Based on the Republic of Korea's experience, Jo (2012) comments that everyone agrees on the importance of building a learning society, but the sense of urgency at the national level seems quite low. As a result, demands for a larger budget for building a learning society tend to have low priority for the government. Therefore, it is important from an early stage to emphasise the critical importance of building a learning society and to link the relevant policies and strategies to concrete funding mechanisms and budgets. Because Singapore devotes the second-highest proportion of its budget to learning and education, backing programmes such as the Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund, it is able to implement effectively various policies and strategies for building a learning society. In Japan, given the fact that the country suffers from insufficient





natural resources, investment in human resources development and education is given high priority within the national budget.

5.7. The policy of building a learning society must be based on robust, evidence-based research

Building a learning society and a lifelong learning system is not easy. This is because it challenges strongly-held views, established practices, institutional power and traditional conceptions of knowledge and of how education and training should be implemented. Most importantly, as society is constantly changing, building a learning society is a moving target.

The case study report on building a learning society in Japan states: 'The role of lifelong learning policy is extremely important in our future society. It would be necessary for us to grasp social trends properly and to plan and implement policies timely and effectively [*sic*]' (Sasai, 2012). It is the task of evidence-based research to inform policies in a timely and effective way. In Japan, the Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau of MEXT conducts a national survey on social education every three years.

The survey seeks to identify trends and examine learning opportunities and citizens' participation in social education. The results of the survey can inform policy-making and programme development and lead to improvements in the management of social education resources. In the Republic of Korea, MOE conducts an annual statistical survey on lifelong education institutions and an annual survey on the lifelong education participation of Korean adults. The Statistical Survey on Lifelong Education is designed to systematically collect and manage statistical information about lifelong education in order to support the creation of effective lifelong education policies (Jo, 2012).

In the three countries, university researchers and national research institutes such as the National Institute for Educational Policy Research of Japan, the National Institute for Lifelong Education of the Republic of Korea, and the National Institute of Education and the Institute of Adult Learning of Singapore have played a crucial role in providing the research necessary to build a learning society. This resonates well with the call of the 2010 Vietnam Forum on Lifelong Learning and Building a Learning Society to strengthen lifelong learning research in universities and research institutes in order to contribute to evidence-based educational reform and innovation.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

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Overall, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore have made remarkable progress in building learning societies. Their approaches and experiences have policy implications for other members of the international community.

First of all, a learning society is not context-free. Although the three countries covered in this synthesis report have similarities in terms of their development contexts, many of the political, social and economic conditions differ. As a result, their policies, strategies and approaches in building a learning society are also different. While the idea of a learning society is being accepted by more and more countries in the world, there will never be a single set of formulae for implementation. The lessons summarised above are only suggestive and tentative; they are not cure-all prescriptions.

The intention to build a learning society presupposes a vision of what the society wishes to become in the long

term. This vision may change over time, and the learning society has to keep pace. This means that building a learning society entails a constant process of reflection on the greater goals of the nation.

Building a learning society is a complicated and multifaceted undertaking and therefore requires integrated and systematic approaches. It is not realistic to expect that a single measure of reform within the education system will produce a learning society. Rather, the process can only be successfully carried out if there is effective coordination between a wide range of reforms. Building a learning society therefore demands vision, political courage, commitment and multi-stakeholder coordination.

Finally, it needs to be stressed that the process of building a learning society is essentially a learning- and capacity-development process. Learning societies can only be built in cultures that promote experimentation, innovation and collective learning.

ANNEX: BUILDING A LEARNING SOCIETY IN JAPAN, THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND SINGAPORE: A SUMMARY*

1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL REASONS FOR BUILDING A LEARNING SOCIETY

JAPAN

- Decreasing vitality in society due to rapidly ageing population
- Declining global economic influence and job security
- Appreciation of cultural diversity

2. NATIONAL GOALS FOR BUILDING A LEARNING SOCIETY

JAPAN

- To develop human resources capable of supporting and developing the society and competing internationally
- To build a society that gives each individual a chance to excel and contribute to the welfare of others

3. PROFILE OF A LEARNING SOCIETY

JAPAN

- An education-based nation offers lifelong learning opportunities for all that enable learners to develop personally, acquire knowledge, participate in society and gain the skills necessary in life and work

4. LEGISLATION

JAPAN

- Revised Basic Act on Education (2006)
- Law Concerning the Development of Relevant Mechanisms for the Promotion of Government Policies for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning (1990)
- Revised Social Education Act (2008)
- Human Resources Development Promotion Act (2006 amendment)

5. NATIONAL POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

JAPAN

- Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education
- Ten-year vision and five-year plans for 2008–2012 and 2013–2017

6. GOVERNANCE

JAPAN

- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare at central level
- Board of Education and LLL Councils at different administrative levels

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Shifting focus from manufacturing to creative and knowledge industries
- Low birth rate and ageing population
- Marginalisation of disadvantaged groups in society

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- To improve quality of life for all through the sufficient provision of learning activities
- To promote the sustainable growth of individuals, communities and the nation

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- A lifelong learning society is one in which anyone can learn anywhere and at any time
- A lifelong learning society consists of three major pillars: self-actualisation, increased employability and enhanced social integration

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Framework Act on Education (1997)
- Act on Credit Recognition and Others (1999)
- Lifelong Education Act (enacted in 1999 and amended in 2007)

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

National Lifelong Learning Promotion Plans:

- First (2002–2006)
- Second (2008–2012)
- Third (2013–2017)

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Ministry of Education and Ministry of Employment and Labor
- National Lifelong Education Promotion Committee
- National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE)
- Lifelong Education Councils at different administrative levels

SINGAPORE

- Reliance on knowledge-economy due to lack of natural resources
- Fierce competition in the globalised world
- Need to create social cohesion in a multicultural society
- Need to promote civic awareness and participation in social and political affairs

SINGAPORE

- To make learning a 'national culture' and promote the recognition that education is a continuum
- To develop originality at every level of society, improve workplace skills and facilitate continuous personal growth

SINGAPORE

- A learning nation is a 'total learning environment', also known as a 'society which is geared towards continuous learning and the development of intellectual capital'

SINGAPORE

- Compulsory Education Act (revised 2001)
- Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund Act (2001)
- Workforce Development Agency Act (2003)
- Education Endowment and Savings Scheme Act (revised 2009)
- Skills Development Levy Act (revised 2012)

SINGAPORE

- Workfare Training Scheme
- Skills Programme for Upgrading and Resilience
- Manpower 21 Report

SINGAPORE

- Ministry of Education and National Institute of Education
- Ministry of Manpower and its Workforce Development Agency
- Institute of Adult Learning

7. LOCALISED INITIATIVES / APPROACHES

JAPAN

- Lifelong learning cities
- Kominkan (community learning centres)
- Citizens' Universities

8. ROLES AND CONTRIBUTION OF FAMILIES

JAPAN

- Build a learning environment at home
- Financial contribution
- Support family members in achieving a balance between work, family life and learning

9. MECHANISMS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT

JAPAN

- Mobilising local governments to invest more in the promotion of education and lifelong learning
- Facilitating contributions from private companies and individuals
- Utilising limited budgets effectively

10. ROLE OF THE PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

JAPAN

- Guarantees equitable education at each stage of education
- Higher education institutions provide learning opportunities that respond to diverse learning needs

11. ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRIVATE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

JAPAN

- The private sector offers high-quality fee-based education
- Private-sector corporations provide their employees with further education and training

12. ROLE OF FORMAL EDUCATION

JAPAN

- Boosts students' motivation to learn and develops their knowledge and academic skills, including logical and critical thinking skills, communication skills, and the ability to make fair judgments

13. ROLE OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

JAPAN

- Diverse programmes offered by Kominkan, Lifelong Learning Centres and Citizens' Universities
- Promote volunteering activities
- Promote the role of libraries as 'regional intelligence centres'

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Lifelong learning cities
- Regional/provincial institutes for lifelong education
- Lifelong education centres and lifelong learning centres for happiness

SINGAPORE

- Community Development Council
- Community clubs sponsored by people's associations

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Home-school-community cooperation
- Parent-teacher communication

SINGAPORE

- Family education programmes supported by the National Family Council
- Local ethnic community groups

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Budget from the Ministry of Education and other ministries
- The Ministry of Employment and Labour operates training-allowance programmes under the Employment Insurance Fund

SINGAPORE

- Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund
- Skills Development Levy
- Skills Development Fund
- Workfare Income Supplement

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Develops and implements curricula from a lifelong learning perspective
- Provides lifelong education courses to meet the demand of parents and local residents
- Provides classrooms, libraries, gyms and other facilities for lifelong education activities

SINGAPORE

- Provides primary and secondary education, gifted education programmes, integrated programmes and tertiary education
- Schools are gaining more autonomy to implement its own curricula, make more decisions, etc.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- NGOs offer citizenship, environment and health education programmes
- Vocational and Technical academies enhance workers' lifelong professional capabilities
- More than 40,000 private education institutions

SINGAPORE

- Offers specialised subjects that are not explored in depth in the public sector
- Operates specialist schools such as the Sports School and the Science and Mathematics School

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Expanding access to primary, secondary and higher education
- Places importance on the equity, quality, autonomy and accountability of formal education institutions

SINGAPORE

- Creates an all-inclusive learning environment
- Provides horizontal movement between pathways
- Provides learning support programmes for students with special needs

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Programmes and activities provided by lifelong education centres
- Bachelor's degree awarded for self-study programmes
- Provide support to the socially marginalised

SINGAPORE

- Community learning initiatives run by the Community Development Council (CDC)
- Family Life Education Centres (FLEC) and Family Life Centres (FLC) aid marginalised families
- Training initiatives for older employees

14. ICT AND E-LEARNING

JAPAN

- Open University of Japan
- Japan OpenCourseWare Consortium (JOCW).

15. IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND LEARNING

JAPAN

- Teacher licence renewal, training programme and textbook authorisation system in formal education
- Placement of social education directors and other social education professionals at educational institutions
- National accreditation system for social education coordinators, librarians and museum curators

16. RECOGNITION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

JAPAN

- National Trade Skill Testing and Certification System
- Certificate for Students Achieving the Proficiency Level of Upper Secondary School Graduates

17. MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM FOR BUILDING A LEARNING SOCIETY

JAPAN

- Expected results and performance indicators in the Basic Plan for Education
- National surveys on social education

18. RESEARCH

JAPAN

- Research activities of national and prefectural Institutes for Educational Policy Research
- Every three years, MEXT conducts a national survey on social education
- University faculties in the field of lifelong learning

19. LESSONS LEARNED

JAPAN

- Families, communities, schools and the private sector all make a valuable contribution to lifelong learning
- Kominkan improve social cohesion
- It is important to open up higher education and exploit ICT for lifelong learning

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Air Correspondence High School (ACHS),
- Korea National Open University, K-MOOC and various cyber universities
- Lifelong education information network

SINGAPORE

- Curriculum 2015
- Infocomm Manpower Development Roadmap Version 2.0

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Placement of lifelong education professionals at lifelong education institutes
- Certification management and training programmes for lifelong education professionals
- Open competitions for high-quality programmes

SINGAPORE

- Shift from ability-driven education to a student-centric, values-driven approach based on the Desired Outcomes for Education
- Curriculum and pedagogy reforms under the vision of Thinking Schools, Learning Nation

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Academic Credit Bank System (ACBS) identifies and recognises various learning experiences
- National Technical Qualifications System (NTQS) Lifelong Learning Account

SINGAPORE

- Workforce Skills Qualifications Frameworks

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- The performance standards proposed by the second National Plan for Lifelong Education Promotion serve as references to evaluate the accomplishment of the vision to build a learning society

SINGAPORE

- Master Plan of Awards
- School Excellence Model

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- Research activities of the National Institute for Lifelong Education
- An annual survey on lifelong education institutions and lifelong education participation
- University faculties in the field of lifelong learning

SINGAPORE

- High-quality research activities conducted by the National Institute of Education and the Institute of Adult Learning

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

- The policies and action plans for building a learning society must be backed up with financial investment
- Regions, cities and communities must play an active role

SINGAPORE

- Education and training should be prioritised in national development strategies
- Tripartite participation in social dialogue and governance is effective in expanding provision of lifelong learning
- Financial support is critical



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JAPAN, THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND SINGAPORE

are in the process of adopting approaches that can be characterised by the terms “learning society” and “lifelong learning”. This report uses case studies to present a description of the three countries' national socio-economic climates and to assess their political will and governmental commitment to building a learning society. These countries understand how important an educated workforce is in order to achieve economic growth, and they are aware of the need to invest in research. All three countries have recently seen substantial demographic shifts, which will have considerable influence on growth over the coming decades. Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore all value education highly, and citizens of all ages are guaranteed the right to education. This report discusses policies, action plans, governance and financing from each country and clarifies common lessons that can be drawn from the three countries' endeavours. Furthermore, it outlines how each country supports quality formal education, community-based learning, workplace learning, ICT and e-learning, and the recognition of prior learning outcomes. In terms of building learning societies, these three countries have made outstanding progress in recent years, and consequently their methods and experiences have implications for many other countries and communities. While the idea of a learning society has been accepted by more and more countries in the world, there will never be a single set of ready-made formulae for its implementation.